

TESTIMONY: HB 5958

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Special thanks to House Judiciary Committee for providing an opportunity for the public to comment on HB 5958, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). I am Director of the Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network (MUSJN), a statewide network of Unitarian Universalist activists from 27 UU congregations.

UUs are proud that we have a right to hold our own religious or spiritual beliefs and that believe that others should also have that same freedom. We believe that freedom to express our religion is protected in the U.S. Constitution and we have an absolute right to believe whatever we want about God, faith and religion. However, we do not have a right to act on those beliefs if their actions would harm others.

For example, one Unitarian Universalists principle is we believe in promoting the dignity of every human being. Our denomination believes in Reproductive Justice. This means that all people should have access to essential health care they need to maintain their well-being. Unitarian Universalists also believe that families should have the right to choose whether to have children or to limit their family size. This law, if enacted, would allow a pharmacist, in the name of his religious beliefs, to deny citizens their legal rights to preventive health services.

Most Unitarian Universalists believe it's immoral to discriminate against people because of they identify as gay or transgender. Since laws haven't yet been passed in Michigan to protect against this type of discrimination, it would be offensive to people of many faith groups if HB 5958 would allow businesses or individuals to deny basic services or dignified treatment to people because they happen to be gay or transgender.

Unitarian Universalists value diversity in our society. We believe that it's important that we learn from people who may not share our religious views or our culture. This RFRA legislation, however, would allow one business or one individual to do harm to individuals who hold different religious beliefs than theirs. Instead of promoting tolerance, this bill promotes conflict. It will likely result in more legal action between Michigan citizens. In short, HB 5958 would allow people from one religious view to impose their religious beliefs on the general public. Tragically, this bill, if passed, would become a threat to the very religious freedoms it claims to protect.

Based on the principles of my religion, I urge the Judiciary Committee to vote NO on HB 5948.